

*W. Cornish
Eton 1861*

ETON REFORM

II.

LONDON

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, AND ROBERTS

1861

If a foe have kenn'd,
Or, worse than foe, an alienated friend,
A rib of dry rot in thy ship's stout side,
Think it God's message, and in humble pride
With heart of oak replace it ;—thine the gains—
Give him the rotten timber for his pains !

COLERIDGE.

LONDON
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ETON REFORM.

A SINCERE jealousy for the honour of the good and liberal men with whom, and under whom, I serve, and a consciousness of being able to save from misapprehension the true friends of the great school in which I am employed, urged me some time back to publish a free commentary on certain publications, which were likely, if unnoticed, to give needless pain to many old Etonians, if not to inflict an injury on Eton.

My commentary was intended to convey, under such reserve as my subordinate position imposed upon me, sufficient indications of a fixed and practical wish for improvement, and suggestions of particular topics for discussion amongst friendly reformers. It was not hard for a candid reader to see, that my pamphlet was written in the interests of reform : and, though some people have failed to perceive this, I am perfectly satisfied with the effects hitherto produced by my publication. It has brought me into communication with gentlemen, who, having strong views of their own about the school, are wise enough to see that their views must, to do any good, be expressed frankly but courteously. Their sympathy is cheering to men who have in past years striven for reform as residents and office-bearers at Eton : and their hope of improvement is strengthened by finding, that there is in the bosom of the institution a settled and strong desire of progress.

The persuasive influence of men, who base their requests on confidence in the persons to whom those requests must be made, may be expected to obtain what cannot be obtained by sickly innuendo, or by stormy dictation.

To clear the ground for progress, it seemed right to show, that we were not selfish, illiberal men, and that ours was not an idle, luxurious school. It seemed also, that the task might be undertaken becomingly by one who had at once a sufficient acquaintance with the school, and a comparatively small stake in its commercial welfare ; who, with regard to his official superiors, was hampered by nothing but his own sense of propriety, and was the least likely person to have been selected by them as a conservative advocate ; who could in short speak for them as a disinterested volunteer, and bear in his own person, without compromising any one else, the insults which had before been directed against better men than himself.

If in the following pages it may look as if there were a change of attitude, it is only because the discussion has passed into a new stage, or rather has come back to the point, from which we were for a time diverted by the reiterated attacks made last year. And, if I cause uneasiness by uttering in public some thoughts which I am known long ago to have expressed both by word of mouth and on paper, within the threshold, I must throw myself on the charity of those who have known me too long to misunderstand me.

I am not aware that any man of active mind can live in the presence of an old and complex institution without wishing to alter it to some extent. He must see many things that he would wish, if he had power, to get rid of ; he must imagine other things which he would wish to introduce ; it is his duty to keep these desires quietly simmering, till the time comes for their utterance. His regard for the institution may be a dominant feeling, without stifling his sense of its defects ; his zeal for the vindication of its fair fame need not disqualify him for judging rightly of its liabilities ; his

willing admission of partial weakness will not by any fair-dealing man be treated as an extorted confession.

One may live and work in such a place as Eton, longing for change, yet making the best of present circumstances; listening to the eager cries of the young with sympathy, and accepting the chilly answers of the old with patience; looking out for anything that can be borrowed from other systems, and clinging not the less to what is really characteristic of one's own system. This would be the temper and spirit of a true reformer in a great government office, in a great college, or in a great school.

Every one seems to think that Eton is a great school*; and its prominence has drawn upon it a good deal of critical severity, which should in fairness be brought to bear no less on other schools. The main charge against it is, not that its discipline is bad, nor that its expenses are high, but that its lessons are useless. The complaint is, that what you learn at Eton is of no use to you when you are grown up. And this may be said with nearly equal truth of all places where young gentlemen are massed together between childhood and adolescence. This complaint has been answered over and over again; but it is for ever renewed, and must for ever be patiently heard. There are of course many ways of dealing with it; perhaps the simplest is to say, "Your lessons have

* A writer in the "Guardian," besides some trifling misrepresentations, accuses me of resenting all public criticism. I thought that I had escaped, as I studiously avoided, anything like over-assertion of the school's comparative goodness. I did but blame one writer for publishing a particular fault which his "friends" at Eton had already, at an anniversary meeting, pointed out to one another, and were strenuously endeavouring to amend: and another writer, for twisting the matter supplied him by this "friend" of Eton, into an invective which neither the "Guardian" nor any ordinary periodical would have printed. The pamphlet, which is said to betray the arrogance of Eton, contains a sharp and strong protest against optimistic views of the institution, candid admission of grave defects, and expressions singularly complimentary to rival establishments. The writer in the "Guardian," happily for the credit of that excellent journal, does not himself criticise with the license he grants to others; but he has a bias, stronger than mine, in favour of that which he defends.

not been useless, for you have learnt the art of learning.” What school is there that furnishes a man for life with knowledge? * What man of thirty is there, that is doing business on the stock of knowledge acquired at school? Certain arts are acquired, certain habits are formed at school †: positive knowledge is acquired afterwards, partly by one great sustained effort when you study for a profession, partly by efforts made, each for a particular purpose, from time to time throughout manhood. In childhood you learn to read, to write, to cypher, to speak French perhaps; your mind is impressed with countless names of things, with a few dates, with a few texts, with a few rhymes, and the like. You go to school, no matter whether it be Eton or not, at the age of twelve or thirteen; and for the next four or five years you are not engaged so much in acquiring knowledge as in making mental efforts under criticism. The knowledge, supposing it to be the concentrated essence of history and science, would not be acquired so fast between the age of thirteen and eighteen as it had been between eight and thirteen; and if you were merely learning the contents of small encyclopædias, the knowledge would run out of your head nearly as fast as it ran in, unless you were one of the few that are gifted with the memory necessary for being a learned man; and, supposing you had such a memory, you might nevertheless grow up to be a man of no wisdom or practical ability. A certain amount of knowledge you can indeed with average faculties acquire so as to retain; nor

* The “Britannia” training ship for naval cadets occurs to me. This naval training seems to be really an apprenticeship. But you cannot well be apprenticed to any other profession so early as fourteen; and I perceive that the “Britannia” is assailed for imprisoning her boys too early, and tearing them too soon from their classics.

† Sir Wm. Hamilton is perhaps the philosopher most in vogue now-a-days. He speaks of “that most contemptible of all delusions, that the mere possession of facts, the simple swallowing of truths, is the end proposed by education;” and endorses the statement of Professor Pillans, that it is not by the “amount of knowledge communicated, but by the amount of thought which such knowledge calls into activity, that the mind is exercised and developed.” (“Discussions on Philosophy and Literature,” p. 344.)

need you regret the hours that you spent on much that is forgotten, for the shadow of lost knowledge at least protects you from many illusions.

But you go to a great school, not for knowledge so much as for arts and habits ; for the habit of attention, for the art of expression, for the art of assuming at a moment's notice a new intellectual posture, for the art of entering quickly into another person's thoughts, for the habit of submitting to censure and refutation, for the art of indicating assent or dissent in graduated terms, for the habit of regarding minute points of accuracy, for the habit of working out what is possible in a given time, for taste, for discrimination, for mental courage and mental soberness.

Above all, you go to a great school for self-knowledge. Your father and mother rejoice in your early dawning of reasoning power ; they treasure up all your pretty sayings, your observations of things in nature, your reproductions of what you have read, your attempts at rhyming or letter-writing ; they think you, and very likely with good reason, intelligent and promising ; they make a friend of you, employ you confidentially, dwell with pure delight on the reflection of their own minds, and give you credit for originating much that you have either inherited or caught by imitation. They bring you to a school, where the hard question is asked, whether you can in a given time, without much help or sympathy, do this or that definite piece of work cleanly and accurately. You do not do it so well as they expected ; you find that you are not so clever as they have let you think yourself. A series of tasks is imposed upon you, which you would shrink from, were it not for the presence of companions doing the same things. You make exertions which no private tutor, were he a Milton or an Ascham, would get you to make. You fail again and again, but you are the humbler for failing. You improve step by step ; and the further you go, the more infinite is the world of thought revealed to you. In a year or two your friends at home get over their disappointment ; and though you

may have forgotten, or lost your interest in, some of your childish accomplishments, they find you substantially improved. Self-complacency is gently trodden down ; self-reliance is slowly lifted up. And this is the great result obtained from lessons, as at other schools, so at Eton ; it is anything but a useless result.

But it may be said, that this result might still be obtained, if the lessons were altered. The competition, the criticism, the Socratic searching, might be kept up, though there were no dead languages employed. I, for one, am quite prepared to believe that it might be so ; and it is in no spirit of defiance that I say, that I wish the experiment could be fairly tried. I can conceive a great public school, with its games, tutors, sermons, and all the machinery, in which there were no more Greek or Latin than in an academy for young ladies. I am quite aware, that we are using in education the literature of the old nations almost entirely for reasons, which were not present to the minds of those who founded our establishments.* About thirty years ago a vigorous movement was made against philological education by the eminent persons who were concerned in the founding of London University, and in the diffusion of useful knowledge. I wish that they had then founded, and sustained under the most favourable circumstances, a school founded upon the plain and solid principle of the sufficiency of modern literature.

But another opportunity has recently occurred. With a handsome endowment, with the highest and most enlightened patronage, with a rural site, with a free choice of masters, a College destined to become a national monument has risen at once into full activity ; and I am on the whole sorry to hear, that it has not discarded the classics.

* The founders of our classical school system made their students read ancient authors, because there was nothing else to read that was interesting ; and it is highly probable that Milton would in our day bid us draw, not merely our physics, but our rhetoric, from other sources than those which he has indicated in his sublime Tractate. At least he would rebuke us scornfully for turning the poetry and eloquence of Greece and Rome, as Cambridge men in this age have done, into a dry museum of verbal curiosities.

If ever there was a chance of starting fair with a modern course of literary training, and trying whether it would, with mathematics and divinity, do justice to the mental capacities of young Englishmen, the chance was given at the opening of Wellington College. Did the friends of useful knowledge, the despisers of dead languages, do their best to exclude the classics from this new and promising seminary? The reply will be, perhaps, that the classics are admitted only on an equal footing with other branches of learning; and that they will not be, as at the old public schools, enforced on all students.

If so, there will, perhaps, be in the College not one school, but two. And if there are two schools, one classical, the other military or mathematical, which will attract the greater number of clever boys? I think the classical. Boys prefer classics to mathematics. But the experiment, which should be tried, is to make mathematics universal, and then give the choice between ancient and modern literature.

If this were done, I believe it would soon be found that the greater number of clever boys preferred the ancients. Why? Because there is more scope for exertion of high powers of mind in studying Greek and Latin than in studying French and German. It does not follow that the boys would make a wise choice, but, if they did so choose, it would perhaps enable some people to understand a little better why the study of the classics has been maintained elsewhere so pertinaciously. However, as a matter of fact, there is, I believe, in the most modern of our public schools, a mixed system of instruction, in which classics are co-ordinate with mathematics and with modern languages.

No one can cavil at this plan. It is founded, no doubt, partly on theory, partly on the empirical imitation of flourishing seminaries. But it remains to be seen whether it will be possible to prevent the dead languages from dominating. The character of the school will be determined, as that of other places has been, by the attractive forces, first of the

Universities, then, in a lower degree, of the Army.* A few boys with a marked fitness for mathematics will work for admission to Woolwich : but most of the studious boys will incline towards Oxford and Cambridge ; and it will be the chief interest of the teachers to prepare them for College honours and emoluments.

You may give a school as practical a character as you like, but you cannot avoid gravitation towards the Universities. School after school has been founded since the cry for useful knowledge was raised: and in every one of them the old, useless studies have become eventually, if they were not from the first, the chief objects of interest to the teachers, and almost the only objects of ambition to the hard-headed students.

The Universities offer solid prizes, wide fields of competition, firm bases of operation for after-life ; and they demand classics, mathematics, and divinity. They may be wrong, but they cannot help shaping the schools to their will.

If I may presume to explain why the Universities persist in maintaining the study of classical literature, I would venture to give two reasons which may be sufficient to account for it. The books read are worth studying for their own sake, and the study of the old languages can be, and has been, made so systematic as to furnish a method of nicely testing the relative powers of almost all minds. The books

* The more a young man has of schoolboy and undergraduate experience, the better officer will he be. Games are the life of public schools to such a degree, that they unfit public schools for completing the preparation for the scientific branches of the service. Not at Eton only, but in the most modern schools founded on the highest religious principles, games have taken the place which in theory belongs to intellectual pursuits. But so much mind is thrown into them, that they are a sort of discipline for a service so practical as that of the unscientific Army; and "the Line" will suffer, if boys are taken from (I will not say Eton, but) Rugby, to be embarracked at Sandhurst, for the sake of two books of Euclid, or of the chronology and geography that can be got up in six weeks by even an idle Rugby boy. A far more serious evil arising from the new system, which makes Sandhurst the only avenue to the Line, will be found in its keeping out of the service young men that have either graduated or resided at the Universities.

deserve study, because the Greeks and the Romans are virtually our ancestors; because their best thoughts are the thoughts of all educated men in Europe and America, and because their best literary works afford a catholic standard of excellence. It has been often pointed out in periodicals which we all read, that the ancient inhabitants of Greece and Italy are incomparably nearer to us than the ancient, or, for the matter of that, than the modern dwellers in other lands that have been, or are, the seats of civilisation; and that it concerns an Englishman more nearly to know how Rome won and held her empire than to know the early records of Hindostan or China. Is it too bold to say, that the Roman statesmen are more to us than even the Crusaders? Is it a paradox to say that through Milton and Pope we are more akin to Virgil than to Chaucer? As in the Litany we call the Hebrew patriarchs our fathers, may we not call Homer and Aristotle our intellectual progenitors? You scoff at us for preferring Virgil to Dante. Are we not merely keeping to our own formation, and disregarding the eruptive mass that breaks its continuity? We are twitted for neglecting Corneille. We cannot study every author or every style; we must be content with what is characteristic, and Corneille is but one of the classics or one of the classicists. Whatever reason an Englishman may have for reading a French tragedian of the seventeenth century prevails more strongly in favour of reading the Attic tragedians. To a Frenchman his old national authors may serve in some measure the purpose of classics; to us, however we may admire or relish them, they cannot come so close as Horace or Plato. Much might be said, and has often been said, of the moral elevation, the sanity, the pathetic wisdom, of such ancient authors as Æschylus, Thucydides, Tacitus; and it might be shown by citations from men who are neither schoolmasters nor rhetoricians, that our national character is ennobled by the living spirit of the two glorious nations. But I refrain, partly because I perceive that the study of antiquity is not necessary; for the Italians have kept up their faith and hope mainly by

the aid of their own literature, and though they ultimately owe to ancient Rome that mediæval poetry which even to Machiavelli was sacred, it is conceivable that they may, for all moral purposes, cut away the ladder by which their poets climbed to the tree of golden fruit, and that, as the Hebrews in the Maccabæan agony were sustained by the memorial strains of their own people only, so it may be in the country of Petrarch and Dante. As the world grows older, it may come to pass that some of our authors may recede so far into a hallowing twilight, that their wonderful merit may have authority over the souls of students, and Milton or Burke may be read by Englishmen with constant and universal admiration. But at present it is almost literally true, that there is only one English author so constantly and universally admired as to be available in the way of a school-book. Shakspeare is at once beyond controversy, and an object of active criticism. Many people that wonder at our minute study of Sophocles have been quite as minute in their study of Shakspeare; and if the experiment is to be made of substituting an English writer for the old books, this is the only English writer that would with general consent be substituted. Does any one think that this would give sufficient employment to young minds? Do what you will in the way of paraphrasing, parsing, etymology, historical illustration, comparison of translators, you would not make a tough lesson out of it. There would not be enough for a lad of active mind to do. More brainwork is bestowed upon turning a passage of Shakspeare into Greek than in any possible analysis of his plays without translation. Suppose then we add other English authors. We shall, if we follow the guidance of the best judges*, resort to the copious and periodic writers of the seventeenth century, rather than to the lucid and sententious writers of the eighteenth century,

* I refer in particular to Mr. Henry Taylor's "Essay on the Life Poetic." He seems to have built his stately and pure philosophy on the classics of the secondary formation, and to be less indebted than any of our high poets to the classics of Athens and Rome.

if we wish to elevate the imagination and cultivate a high taste. Now there are two obvious objections against using Hooker, Jeremy Taylor, Milton; or the like, as class-books. In the first place, you cannot divest them yet, perhaps our descendants may, of a controversial and uncatholic nature; and in the second place, you cannot get young students to be permanently interested in them as much as they are in the best Greek and Latin books. These objections apply even more strongly to the more sensible, but less enthusiastic, authors of the next age. I do not say that these difficulties are insuperable, but I beg that they may not be overlooked by those who wish to have "English taught in public schools." Perhaps we are wrong in thinking, that we create a sufficient interest in the best literature of our own country by pointing out passages for translation, or as materials for something more free than translation, though we find practically that our classical students in due time get to know and relish our native poets more heartily than if they had been drilled all through boyhood in "elegant extracts."* We may be wrong in neglecting English grammar, though we find that as a matter of fact our pupils write and speak their own tongue grammatically, and in giving no room in our time-tables for English etymology, though we teach the elements of it collaterally, whilst teaching Latin, and reading the authorised version of the Scriptures. But at all events we have no doubt, that we are right in securing the use of class-books of such a nature that the student may feel in using them, that every lesson enables him to learn the next lesson more easily and more perfectly. The experience of institutions where everything is voluntary, such as colleges for working men, is sufficient to show that it is natural to prefer studies in

* Without books of extracts, the difficulty of teaching English would be seriously increased by the expense of buying whole books: with a system of extracts you run the risk of making young people dislike for life the authors thus introduced to them; and the partisans of English literature would perhaps rather have us run this risk with Xenophon or Ovid, than with Robertson or Pope.

which one can feel that one is "getting on," and, I ask, how can one feel that one is "getting on" in the study of Shakespeare?

In saying, that the experiment ought to be tried, whether modern literature be sufficient for the training of the mind, I was thinking of our own literature, not by itself, but in combination with the literature primarily of France, then of Germany and Italy. It is for others who have mastered these foreign languages to prove, as I believe they can, that for all but the most powerful minds a sufficient discipline might be by real scholars constructed out of French grammar and French composition. I except the most powerful minds, for whom every modern language that has a rich literature would be, as I am informed, too easy. With this exception, I would substitute French for Latin in all schools except those which prepare for the Universities; and I would have the Universities so far enforce the study of French as to ensure a constant supply of schoolmasters capable of teaching it with Latin, and on the same principles as Latin. I am aware that it would not be worth while to charge young men with the expenses of academical life for the sake of any studies that do not require more exertion and more help than French. I do not go so far as to propose that they should take degrees in modern languages. But I would incorporate the study of modern languages with the study of history, which should include the history of literature, or the history of opinion, so that we should have men translating Guizot, writing essays in French on the discoveries of Adam Smith, "getting up" Montesquieu or Dumont, and the like. If academical studies were enlarged in this direction, we should have men engaged in teaching at public schools that were embued with the political philosophy and the criticism of the present and of the last century. It would not follow that they must inflict all this on boys, but, at least, the regular studies of the schools would become less jejune than they are.

The Head Master of a great school would generally select

as his subalterns those, who, besides taking classical or mathematical honours, had passed the modern school or tripos*, for which examination he who wished to be a schoolmaster might study, not at Cambridge or Oxford, but on the Continent. Not every one thus qualified would, as a matter of course, undertake to teach the elements of French grammar ; but any one who did would find it (as men of my acquaintance assure me on their own experience) a pleasant and wholesome diversion from the routine of Greek and Latin. Masters enrolled in “the covenanted service” would have less difficulty in teaching the boys than has generally been encountered by foreign gentlemen however accomplished ; and the weaknesses inherent in a parasitical or “extra” study would be in the simplest way removed. It concerns the welfare of the country, that young people born in “the governing classes” should be thoroughly and liberally taught French, not the French of couriers or ladies’-maids, but the French of diplomatists and literary men. Let this study, like that of history, and in close connection with it, be brought into the academical course ; let it be general, though not universal ; effectively encouraged, though not enforced on all. Till this is done, you can hardly expect a school to push its boys into lessons, which will take up time that they seem not to be able to spare from pursuits tending towards success in the Universities. Till modern languages are likely to help an Oxford or a Cambridge man to solid advantages, a school like Eton cannot be blamed for treating them as “voluntary subjects ;” and as long as they are not an integral part of the school system, they will not be taught in a way really satisfactory.

Meanwhile, the Universities have a right to the very best teaching of the ancient languages that can be procured at

* It is a pity that Cambridge does not borrow from Oxford the principle of compelling every one to pass, at the end of his career, through a supplementary course of studies either “moral” or “natural.” The Oxford school of Law and History might be improved, but is actually efficient ; which is more than can be said of any corresponding arrangements at Cambridge.

schools. Is this given at Eton? Setting aside ideal perfection, are Oxford and Cambridge contented with Eton scholarship? I believe that Cambridge is: I am not sure of Oxford. I do not think it right to argue from the most recent successes, though they are a comfort to us in the midst of so much detraction. I rather rest upon the facts, that for several years past our second-rate and third-rate men have been welcomed and honoured by Colleges at Cambridge, not merely because they were well-behaved, but because they were well-trained students; and that Cambridge scholars, who knew nothing of Eton save by reputation, have selected it as the school for their sons; and again, that Eton men, who have been idle at Cambridge, have found it easy to take a second-class degree in the classical tripos. This is not a very imposing way of putting the case; but it will be appreciated by a few liberal readers; at all events, I am not going to quote the Cambridge Calendar, and advertise our list of prizemen. At Oxford we have not been of late years so successful. Eton men go in shoals to Christ Church, and Christ Church has not been a seat of industry: fashion and society have been too strong for the good genius of either institution.* Good Eton men go every year to Balliol; and the best generalisation I can frame about them, after hearing all the evidence that has been offered me, is, that they are at least as good as the men of any other school, except Rugby. It seems to me, that Rugby is the best school in England, although Eton has the best raw material. I observe, that at both Universities a Rugby man has an elective affinity for an Eton man: each finds in the other something that is lacking in himself. It does not become me to point out what there is that Rugby can borrow from Eton; but I will be so bold as to say in print, what I have habitually said in conversation,

* Undergraduates at Oxford say that they are hurried into responsions, before they have forgotten what they learnt at Eton. Others complain, that their old Eton tutors are too busy to spare them an evening for conversation when they visit the school unexpectedly; an accusation which sounds like a compliment.

that Eton may with great advantage imitate the school, which Arnold has hallowed, in systematically studying history. My Oxford advisers insist on our writing English essays: I should prefer French essays; but if we cannot have French, by all means let us have English, and overcome, as best we can, the inability of boys to stick to their thesis when not provided with rough materials, and the difficulty of distinguishing what is their own from what they copy out of books. When Oxford men come amongst us in greater numbers, they will no doubt set us in the way of essay-writing: it is not quite a Cambridge accomplishment, and even Oxford men do not agree in setting much store by it as an habitual exercise for boys. But besides these essays, the Balliol men lament that we do not translate into good English; and they suggest, that, if we spent less time in saying by heart, we should have more time for translations. I do not admit, that we neglect translation, or have a low standard of English style; but there can be no doubt that we might do better in this as in almost every other kind of work; and, if such a complaint is made, we are bound to attend to it. Then again some Oxford men find fault with our Latin prose; but their wiser friends say, that they make too much of Latin prose. It is proposed to us to substitute Latin "versions" for Latin themes: we find that this, if done to any great extent, diminishes the effort made by the boy, and increases the labour of the altering machine; whilst it is through the medium of the theme that we get those abstracts of history and faint shadowings of philosophy, which some people would have us take in English, and a few in French.

This is all that I have heard in the way of finding fault with the literary training at Eton; and I should think it unwise to dwell upon any part of this gentle indictment, except the charge of inferiority to Rugby in historical dissertation. Probably the list of defects would be increased by the observations of first-rate College Tutors, if such men were employed as examiners for the Newcastle Scholarship; and perhaps some further advantage might be derived from the

reports of strangers engaged to aid the Head Master in looking over the papers done in the higher school-trials, and in the adjudication of our public composition prizes. The visits of competent critics, not bred at Eton, would do good service, if only by qualifying some disinterested persons to dispel the prejudices which must be expected to gather strength against any kind of veiled prophet.

I have spoken incidentally of public prizes for composition. The school has been ridiculed for having too many prizes. It has, nevertheless, been pointed out by an Oxford undergraduate, who is not a timid reformer, that we have as a matter of fact too few prizes, and that these are not made the most of. We have essay prizes, Latin and English; but no one, save the competitors, knows anything about them, till they are mentioned in the School List: my advisers tell me, that if the essays were printed, and published on some great feast-day, they would be done better, and would interest the boys who are too young to compete. Our Latin declamations are public; but there is no public honour done to those who declaim successfully; and this exercise, which is the best thing we have, promoting as it does some oratorical art, some historical research, and very careful writing of Latin prose, is by custom limited to the collegers. Several other prizes, which load our School List with unsightly annotations, are given only to boys in the first or the two first divisions; and old Etonians complain, that, when they were at school, they never knew on what grounds these were adjudged. The first division has, perhaps, too many prizes; whilst below the second division there is no chance for a good versifier to win a book by a single good exercise.

It is in keeping with our overstrained love of privacy, that a selected copy of verses, though it has cost much labour of boy and man and is a pretty piece of literature, is, after a public reading to which no one listens but the youthful author, consigned either to the pigeon-holes of the Head Master, or, in a very few cases, to the unfathomable recesses of the College Library, from which, half a century hence, it may

possibly come forth to be printed, and brandished in the faces of the degenerate. Old Etonians, who wish to see our young men gaining medals at Cambridge and Oxford, instruct me to say, that we should do well to have similar prize-exercises, or “*Prolusiones*,” at Eton, with similar rules for the competition; that they should be printed, if not recited, and published on some day when veterans come to look at the exploits of the young; and that, when exercises are “sent up for good,” the best of them should be selected by the Head Master, and their authors invited to copy them into his book, and the book left on his public table, or occasionally in the School Library. Our friends believe, that these arrangements would at once raise the standard of composition so high as to make Etonians write more successfully at Oxford and Cambridge, and enable those who wish to lecture on the school in country towns to ascertain from time to time the real amount of inaccuracy, or of “*Italian conceit*,” actually prevalent.

It has been taken for granted that composition is to be maintained. Perhaps no one objects to composition in prose, only to versification. I believe that some people, who have never tried to teach Latin, would condemn schoolmasters to an unvaried course of prose composition. What a weary business this is, those men can bear witness, who carry on the work of schoolmasters under melancholy circumstances in some Oxford Colleges; in which, as I am informed, one starts at the age of eighteen writing fair Latin prose, and after three or four years attains the faculty of writing rather better Latin prose. It is in fact the driest and the most impalpable kind of composition. The style of Cicero is artificial to a degree quite beyond the imagination of all but scholars; and the attempts that are made to express the thoughts of Burke or Macaulay in Ciceronian phraseology are far more curiously “*painful*” than any verse-making. That Latin prose is not congenial to the tastes of the young, is proved by the fact, that at Cambridge, where there is a good struggle every year for the Greek verse or Porson prize, and able

men try for the Ode and the Epigram medals, there is hardly any competition for the handsome rewards given by the members for Latin essays.

Ladies observe, with much plausibility, that in the study of no language but Latin and Greek do people think it worth while to write verses. I believe, as a matter of fact, that verse-making is employed in examining young people as an easy test of the knowledge of German; probably because German verse is more simple than German prose. Be this as it may, fair Latin verses can be written far more simply than fair Latin prose, though the best Virgilian verse is very elaborate. Boys of ten or twelve, as a general rule, can construct only very simple sentences. If they construct them in prose, they have no interest in being accurate; if they are versifying, they feel that they must get the right words in the right places, or else they have a quarrel with the prosody. Thus it comes to pass, that they take far more pains with verses, than with prose, and turn out a much better article. As they advance in prose, they do it better for making verses also; because they form in versifying the habit of attending to the artificial order* in which words are to be placed, without which Latin prose is good for nothing. As they make progress in verse, they pass from making out a word-puzzle to the dilution or modification of simple "ideas." Here they have to put a pressure on their own minds, totally different from any effort of which at that time of life they are capable in prose. Suppose a boy is writing a narrative in Latin prose: he wants to say, that somebody "entered into political life:" a boy of average merit knows that he must not attempt to put this word for word into Latin, and he applies to his

* I am writing here for ladies, and I must remind them, that Latin differs from French and English in its numerous inflections; for instance, the subjective or nominative case generally differs in form from the objective or accusative case; and this enables the Latinist to place his words upside down. No one, that has not tried teaching, can imagine, how often a boy has to make a considerable mental effort to understand the difference between these two cases; in making a verse he is forced to feel the difference.

dictionary for a phrase, and copies it out in pure faith without understanding the connection between the English and the Latin expressions. It does not matter to him whether the phrase suits his sentence ; he has done his duty in using his dictionary, and there is an end of it ; if it is wrong, his tutor and the dictionary must settle it between them. On the other hand, suppose he has to make a verse on the dawn. He asks himself what is to be said about the dawn, and chooses the sun as his nominative case. He sits brooding over this conception for some time ; the tutor, not hearing the pen at work, enquires whether he wants any help. He states, that he has formed the intention of saying something about the sun ; he proposes to say that the sun rises ; he is told, that this does not give the framework for his verse ; he remembers an empirical rule, and substitutes for the neuter verb "rise" a verb which will govern a case ; this substitution is a mental effort, made for the sake of the verse. Some people will believe me, if I say, that a boy takes some pride and pleasure in making an effort of this kind. Those who have not made verses may form a notion of this pleasure by remembering the pleasure they took in Algebraic processes of substitution and expansion. Verses are at least as amusing as equations. In each process there is a consciousness that one is constructing something. But there is this amongst other points of dissimilarity ; in Algebra you cannot, in Latin verse you can, attain at an early age, even at thirteen or fifteen, the honour of producing something excellent of its kind, highly interesting to an unbiassed and grown-up reader, and well worth preserving. I invite those who ridicule verse-making to suggest some other kind of composition, on which you can expect a boy of good abilities to bestow as much pains, or in which he will take as much interest, or through which he will be able to turn out anything so well worth reading, or by which he can be drawn into so thoughtful a study of English poetry, or which will give him so high a conception of lucid narrative, pure phraseology, artistic finish.

A critic in the “Saturday Review,” * whom I notice only because I find that he has made some impressions on a lady whom I wish to satisfy on this subject, has made the slight mistake of limiting to Latin versification what I said of classical composition, including Greek verse. I would also observe, that when I wrote a few sentences about composition, I wrote merely for the purpose of showing, that it was a practice conducive to industry, and calculated to elicit, what we had been accused of overlooking, the energies of ordinary minds. It was not likely, therefore, that I should, by introducing the word Latin, have debarred myself from the advantage of associating the diligence of school-boys with Greek composition.

It is very natural to protest against the attempt to make all boys of sixteen write poetry. Now the only Latin verse that is necessarily poetical is lyric verse ; that is to say, an Aleaic Ode cannot, but an Elegiac or Hexameter exercise can, be written meritoriously, though not brilliantly, without poetical perceptions. And this is much more clearly true of Greek dramatic verse, which indeed is often written with great success by young men who cannot gain honour in any other kind of versification.

Latin verses have been written at Eton since the days of the Paston letters, though raised to their present eminence in the reign of George III., by emulation with the brilliant Latinity of Westminster. Greek verse, in a loose style, began to flourish at Eton at the end of the last century. Greek Iambics, the most regular, and, so to speak, scientific form of composition, were introduced almost in our own times from Cambridge : and we have but followed other

* In the “Saturday Review” of May 19th, 1860, appeared an article written evidently by a competent person, who, unlike the reviewer of my pamphlet, points out some reasons for the maintenance of classical composition. The two chief propositions he advances are, “that a thorough and complete scholar cannot be manufactured by any other process;” and that “it plays a very important part in the development of taste.” He thinks that for many “blockheads” it is a waste of time; and for “blockheads” after the age of fifteen or sixteen I think so too. But I think it serves to stimulate even dull boys up to a certain point, better than the mere learning of lessons.

schools in making them an integral part of our routine. They are of the greatest value in promoting industry; for a boy begins to practise them when Latin verses become easy. Taking a simply practical view of the case, one may say that almost any boy, who reaches the higher classes of a school, can do them in some fashion; that they open a very long vista of progress in the knowledge of Greek; and that they are inseparably connected with the highest scholarship of Cambridge.

There is no kind of composition practised at Eton which is not in request at the Universities; nor would either Oxford or Cambridge cease to demand versification as requisite for honours and solid rewards, if Eton, in deference to her patrons, abandoned it. Again, there is no kind of composition practised at Eton with more zeal than is necessary for competition at the Universities with other schools.

Nor is it true, nor has it been true for many years, that verse-making alone wins for a boy at Eton promotion or distinction in the school. It often happens, that a good versifier is not high in his class; this I find to be the case with eight boys in the last School List. It happens still more frequently, that a boy is high in his class without being a showy, even though he be a correct, versifier; for instance, of the first twelve boys who have just passed through their last trials and entered the upper division of the fifth form, six are, and six are not, honoured with the Arabic numerals, which denote three or more selected copies of verses; and in the next set of boys, or "remove," fifty-three in number, there are only four thus distinguished, of whom one is the captain, one is the third, one is the twenty-eighth, one is the thirty-sixth. For promotion is won by general efficiency, displayed not in composition only, but in translation, in history, in divinity, in miscellaneous questions on lessons, and particularly in mathematics.

Versification is highly esteemed at Eton: so it is at the Universities, at Winchester, at Westminster, at Christ's

Hospital, at Marlborough, and, as every one knows, at Harrow and Shrewsbury.

Sir William Hamilton exerted his influence to improve the classical studies of Scotland, and Latin verse has been of late years encouraged at Edinburgh, whilst Glasgow men have beaten the Southrons in writing Greek verses for the Gaisford prize at Oxford. Latin verses on Jerome Buonaparte were written the other day by the chosen representatives of Parisian schools meeting at the Sorbonne for their annual contest, (I am sorry to hear that they are allowed books on these occasions,) and I once knew an American who tried to introduce the art into the States.

Why should Eton alone be run down on this score? Why should a schoolmaster, who vindicates composition in all forms, Greek, Latin, French, as an instrument of education, be confounded with those, who applaud the literary trifling of elderly politicians, and who connect the Sapphics of the boy with the State-papers of the Governor-General?

It is some relief to see, that the author of a very painful article on Eton in the "Westminster Review" has not added to the bitter and cruel charges, which he brings against the school, the charge of wasting time on composition, and that he sensibly recognises the necessity of so shaping its course of studies as to conform primarily to the Universities. This reviewer is entitled to an explanation of what I have said about our mathematical studies. In denying that they were "unreal," I admitted that they were secondary; I expressed my belief, that classes and mathematics were in no English seminary on an equal footing. "In Trinity College, Cambridge," I went on to say, "mathematics hold the second place*; but what Trinity man would allow that they are neglected?" If these words convey the meaning which the reviewer attaches to them, that mathematical studies bear the same ratio to classical studies at Eton as at Trinity

* This is disputed, I find, by some Trinity men; but not by other Cambridge men. I lay no stress on it; but I believe that the reputation of the College is literary and philosophical rather than mathematical.

College, I certainly did not intend them to convey that meaning; it was obviously not my intention to say anything so positive or precise; for I wrote on the whole question with the caution proper to a man trained in an unmathematical college; and whilst denying, that these pursuits were "systematically neglected," I scrupulously abstained from expressing an opinion as to the amount of time that ought to be allowed them. The reviewer believes that they are neglected or starved; and he relies for proof on the programme, which states that in the trials for the *upper** division only one book of Euclid is required, contrasting with this moderate demand the initiation of the oldest boys at Christ's Hospital into the integral calculus. Though knowing nothing of any calculus, I must, as there is no one else to do it, make some observations on this. I am informed that the integral calculus is studied in the second year of residence at Cambridge; and my informant thinks, that the "senior Grecian," even if he be nineteen years of age, had better not be pushed on so far.† The reviewer mentions conic sections as being within the Christ's Hospital routine for senior Grecians. Conic sections form part of the examination for the Tomline prize at Eton; and this has been the case for a good many years.

It is thought undesirable to push school-boys beyond what they would read in their first year's residence at Cambridge;

* Elsewhere he says that there are no trials for those who have entered the middle division. The exact truth is, that half of the boys examined in the last trials remain, for three months after they are over, in the first moiety of the middle division. Every boy is tried for his place *twice* after he gets into the fifth form.

† Dr. Whewell's volume "On a Liberal Education," published in 1850, had, I believe, a decided effect on Eton. I read in it: "Arithmetic, and, when that is mastered, geometry, mensuration, algebra, and trigonometry, in succession, should form a part of the *daily* business of every school which is intended to prepare students for the University." Elsewhere he says: "Boys should be taught arithmetic and geometry, and, it may be, algebra and trigonometry, in the great classical schools, in the same way in which they are in the best commercial schools." I cannot discover that he asks for anything beyond trigonometry.

these subjects are studied by a certain number of boys at Eton; and no complaint has been made by Mr. Tomline, the munificent patron of mathematics, that the standard in competition for his prize is too low. It is an entire mistake to suppose, that boys are examined in upper-division trials just before they win the Tomline prize, or, as a general rule, just before they leave school. Those who do best in these trials have two or even three years of Eton life afterwards; those who have a real aptitude for mathematics begin at once to work for the Tomline prize; and the collegers have two or three compulsory examinations more, in which they find that mathematics count for so much, as very materially to affect their chance of election to King's College scholarships.*

I have shown, then, that one cannot infer from the upper division trials the ultimate standard of mathematical proficiency, as a great deal more is done by many boys afterwards. But other boys leave the school within half a year, some few within a week, of these trials. The question arises, whether they can be warranted to pass their matriculation, or the Chelsea examination for the army. A good college at Oxford, like the Chelsea Board, requires the knowledge of two books of Euclid, and our assailants point out that we require only one book. This sounds very bad, but gentlemen who teach Euclid tell me that to know two books is very far from being twice as much as knowing one, and that he who knows the first book can very quickly master the seventeen (reduced in practice to thirteen) propositions of the second. But our critics are mistaken in believing, that the programme which they quote represents the real amount of Euclid em-

* We shall no doubt be reproached for not extending to the elder oppidans the same mathematical pressure as we put upon the elder collegers. The *school* subjects no boys that have entered the upper division to any compulsory examination that affects school rank, trusting to the prizes offered to voluntary competition, such as the Newcastle Scholarship; but *King's College*, in concurrence with *Eton College*, subjects the collegers to a mixed examination such as other schoolboys undergo at Cambridge, in competing for scholarships tenable at Cambridge. As the collegers work for these, so do some oppidans work for Trinity or Balliol scholarships. There is no need to worry them at that age about their places in school.

braced by the examination.* The rules require the knowledge of one book as the minimum ; that is to say, a boy who does not get a fair proportion of marks in questions on the first book loses a year's promotion. But the examination embraces the third book. Whether this is enough for boys of whom a considerable number are only fifteen years old, and will have some three years more of school life, it is not for me to judge. I can only bear witness, that the boys attribute great importance to the Euclid paper, and that the gentleman who regulates our mathematical course invites any one that pleases to inspect not only the questions set, but the answers given, in this and every other mathematical examination. Till complaints are made by young men themselves, that they are, for instance, prevented from getting Trinity scholarships, or commissions in the line, by their bad grounding in mathematics, after having been allowed at Eton to think themselves well grounded, I shall not be persuaded that my mathematical colleagues are inefficient, or their routine, as compared with other public schools, unsatisfactory.

But the "Westminster Review" has done us a real service, I think, by plainly stating, what I gladly echo, that mathematics will never have a fair chance given them of interesting the clever boys until some of the teachers are regular and complete tutors. The father of a boy, who is believed to have a turn for this pursuit, should be able to select for him a tutor, who, without being ignorant of classics, professed to teach mathematics. A classical teacher might be employed to correct the boy's exercises and to help him in any other literary work which his own tutor did not undertake. There would, perhaps, be not many boys that needed a mathematical tutor, particularly in their earlier years, but no difficulty should be made about migrating to a mathematical tutor's house, if the aptitude were ascertained, or the preference determined, in the later years of residence. It is no reproach to Eton that this arrangement has not been made,

* Vide "Anti-paterfamilias," by a present Etonian ; a pamphlet lately published by Ingalton at Eton.

for it has never been proposed before. But I do not say that after due consideration of the proposal it would not be illiberal to persist, on the plea of the supremacy of classical literature, in requiring the teachers of mathematics to be content with the tenure of inferior boarding-houses, with no tutorial control over their boarders.

The "Westminster Review," taking a broad view of the analogy between a public school and an university, opens a question which I hope will not be neglected by those who shall undertake to reform such institutions as Eton, whether physical science should be introduced into the course of study. Geography, which is especially mentioned in the article, should be taught, I think, as ancillary to history, rather than as a science studied for its own sake; and experience has forced me to think, that, generally speaking, science, or rather scientific information, should be communicated to boys not as an independent lesson, but rather in illustration of literature, excepting, of course, those exact sciences which are within the province of the mathematician. If the universities did more for science (and they cannot be said to do much for it till they appropriate whole colleges or a fair proportion of fellowships to men of science), many schoolmasters, deeply imbued with literature, would be tinctured with science also, and their literary instruction would be made far more attractive to boys thereby, for they would bring with them from their academical society at least a philosophical spirit, and an interest in physical discoveries. The best mathematical men are also good in physics. Such men will not condescend, as a general rule, to be mere teachers of arithmetic and Euclid, but they will take tutorships in schools with full powers, honours, and hopes of advancement, and I believe that their influence, though they gave no regular lessons in such subjects as physical astronomy or experimental science, would counterpoise most wholesomely the tendency that there is, not in schools only but in society, to capricious, frivolous, and superstitious thought.

Eton ought to be, and, I believe, will be, an university for boys. An university comprehends the arts and the sciences,

each in its order. Boys cannot learn all these, nor can under-graduates ; but that is no reason why they should not have their choice. The mind of a boy feeds naturally on literature ; but it is that literature which embraces scientific information.

It is for the philosophical schoolmaster to judge, in this or that case, how high the curtain is to be lifted which conceals from eager inquisitive eyes the wonders of that nature which is within, and of that nature which is outside, humanity. The young mind is to be humbled by the grandeur of those literary master-pieces which it imitates, and cannot hope to approach ; but it is not the less to be enriched by picking up the crumbs that fall from the banquets of philosophy.

It has been said by a writer whose words are chosen to bear a precise and calculated meaning, that “in the first eighteen or nineteen years of life men might learn the elements of all human knowledge, and acquire habits which would lead them into all parts of literature or science according to their intellectual tendencies.”* This idea should be ever present to the minds of those who teach the young ; but it will mislead us, unless we keep in view at the same time two facts that limit the conception,—the fact that it is dangerous to press those who are eager to learn, and the fact that in this country and this generation honour and happiness are sought by the young, not indoors, but out of doors. The first of these limitations of mental progress cannot help being felt with peculiar force in a school which, in spite of an unpromising situation, is frequented by a very considerable number of delicate boys. Our apparent stock of brains is in reality kept low by weakness of health. Many of those, whom we are said to indulge in softness of life, are, not without reason, the objects of unceasing anxiety, which levies a constant tax on the leisure of their temporary guardians, and makes their advance in learning unsteady and precarious. Many are sent to school not so much to learn lessons as to tide over a critical age between safe barriers. If we were to

* Dr. Whewell, “On a Liberal Education,” p. 68.

follow out, as in our enthusiastic youth we wish to follow out, the noble scheme of those who taught Gregory Cromwell* and Jane Grey, we should be checked at once by the remonstrances of a father trembling for his heir.

The second hindrance to book-work is felt perhaps more by those who keep school near a serviceable river, than by those who have no fascination of water to strive against. But even in the wilderness selected for the site of the new public school, to which I have already made respectful reference, it cannot be but that bodily prowess will be habitually esteemed by boys of excellent understanding more highly than it was in the last generation, so highly as to lower the standard of purely intellectual activity. I am not afraid to say, that if the new College is to be, as I trust it will be, a fashionable public school, it will, like Eton, find the body encroaching and usurping ; it will not be able to make games like cricket and football, what they are in sermons supposed to be, mere recreations subsidiary to studies. Boys under private tuition are preparing to live; at public schools they live. Their life is in their habitual and healthy interests ; their interests are more in what is done out of doors than in what is done indoors. The lovers of knowledge may deplore this ; and indeed they are bound to contend against it. The admirers of public and rural schools must accept this, for evil as well as for good, as the characteristic feature of their favourite institutions.

Perhaps one may be engaged in education without committing oneself to any more definite theory of games than a belief that they satisfy emulation under the restraint of laws willingly obeyed, and thus leave the young student free to pursue knowledge in a disinterested and tranquil spirit ; and that they promote, not exclusively, but more effectively than a literary contest, that which is far more conducive to wisdom than any accomplishment, the happy growth of sympathies and affections.

* See the "Pictorial History of England," vol. ii. p. 827.

APPENDIX.

A WRITER in the March number of the "Cornhill Magazine," whom, for the sake of convenience, I shall henceforth name as Mr. —, has been "truculently asserting his inoffensiveness," in a letter far more carefully written than his second letter, but containing many bits of misquotation and inaccuracy. I promised, he says, a reply to his attack on Eton that should not be "polemical." What I really promised was a reply, "not merely polemical :" that is to say, I took the polemics as accidental or secondary. He has made up a nosegay of severe expressions quoted from my pamphlet. Only two of these expressions are correctly quoted : one of these I gladly retract, for it has been pointed out to me, that to call the Cornhill writer "an imitator of Cobbett" is rather hard upon Cobbett.

He assumes that I must be aware of the unfairness of a letter written by a Cambridge scholar in vindication of Dr. Goodford's credit. The defence is said to be unfair because no mention was made of academical distinctions, other than scholarships, which Dr. Goodford might have gained. I hold, with Cambridge men generally, that, in default of the classical tripos, no distinction but an University scholarship could be accepted as a proof of solid classical attainments. It would be carrying the admiration of Latin and Greek verses much further than we, who write them every week, are prepared to carry it, if one were to ground a life-long reputation on a Latin ode or a copy of Greek iambics. Many of the "senior classics" gain none of these "nineteen prizes" for which a Kingsman in the old times might, it seems, have contended : some do not even write for them.

I should, I confess, have rested my chief's reputation, if it had been seemly for me to volunteer a defence of it, on grounds not so hypothetical as his actual defender chose. Men who know anything about these technical matters will be struck perhaps by the fact, that the Head Master of Eton numbers amongst his fifteen classical assistants six first-class men, of whom two are from Oxford,

and four Cambridge University Scholars, of whom three took their degrees before the classical tripos was thrown open to their College, whilst the fourth was almost at the head of the first class; and that these ten men, whose right to give an opinion can hardly be disputed, agree in considering their chief as better read in Greek and Latin literature, and more thoroughly exact in the minutiae of both languages, than any one of their own number; and that he has most effectually raised the standard of scholarship at Eton by his authority as a critic, silently compelling his assistants to take more pains than are taken anywhere else in England with the correction of exercises.

I do not say that Mr. —— was bound to know this before he wrote his second letter; I do say that the gentleman behind whose shield he stooped to screen himself could hardly help knowing it, and that it is rather hard upon us that we should suffer at once from his statements and his silence, from that intimate connection with us which gave weight to his lecture, and from that want of information which he has done so little to remedy. The Tiverton lecturer ought to have known and stated, that the present Head Master has made the work of the first sixty boys in the school infinitely more solid and scholarlike than it was before his appointment; that he has done for the sixth form what his predecessor did for the fifth form, abolished all sham lessons. In a recent contest for University scholarships at Cambridge, of the four first candidates three were Eton men trained for years by the Head Master in class; and one of them remarked proudly that "all three had been taught Greek grammar in Dr. Goodford's pupil-room." In the long run a scholar's reputation cannot rest so firmly on his successes as an undergraduate as on the testimony of his grateful pupils.

Mr. —— expresses some surprise at our thinking that he had wronged the gentleman of whom I have been constrained to say so much. Besides saying "incidentally" that Dr. Goodford was personally undistinguished, Mr. —— had in his second letter asserted that the scholarship of Eton, so far from being improved by the present Head Master, had "deplorably dwindled." It was not "incivility," but something worse, to charge a responsible person with allowing this to happen. However, the charge is not repeated in the third letter, and it is dropped by the champion of Sir John Coleridge who writes in the "Guardian." What is still alleged is "the falling off in classical learning amongst the oppidans;" and this is

said to have been admitted by me. I perceive that I have not everywhere limited my admission on this head so carefully as I did in one sentence in which I spoke of the "relative idleness of the older oppidans." I do not admit that anywhere except in the two first divisions (the first sixty boys) have the clever oppidans been at any time within the last ten years idle. All that I do admit is, that amongst those who are old enough to compete for the Newcastle scholarship there have been within the last few years several oppidans who ought to have done more, and amongst these a few who might have been persuaded by their teachers to do more. In the other divisions there have always been many studious oppidans; though it is unreasonable to expect that high standard of industry amongst them as a mass which is maintained amongst the scholars of the College. Whatever short-comings there were might have been legitimately mentioned in public, in moderate terms, by almost any man; not by one whose position, as a confidential adviser of Eton College, insured his being respectfully heard if he noticed them privately.

Mr. — calls our attention in italics to the fact that for two years all the classical prizes have been gained by oppidans. This really concerns only the first two divisions, to which all the classical prizes mentioned in his list are appropriated. On looking to the School List, he will find a bare majority of collegers amongst those who have numerals attached to their names; and, if he can get copies of the printed Collection reports, he will be gratified by seeing that the oppidans hold their own. The truth is, that at the top of the school we have a dense mass of collegers, almost all struggling for election to King's or other inferior rewards, from which the oppidans are excluded; whereas very many of the most promising oppidans, being ripe for the University, leave school before they ever reach the two first divisions. There is moreover some incorrectness in saying that the oppidans "win prizes only in those branches of education for which extra charges are made;" for this implies that the collegers cannot contend on fair terms with the oppidans except in classics, and that mathematics and modern languages are on the same footing. Mathematical lessons are enforced on all; and though a colleger does not pay for this, yet he has teaching enough to give him fair play in the Tomline examination, in which it is certain that no colleger ever failed for want of instruction. Lessons in modern languages are not enforced: about one

hundred and fifty boys, I believe, learn either French or German, including a few collegers; if the whole school learnt French, nevertheless a colleger, generally speaking, would have no chance against the sons of fashionable people who have learnt the language at home or abroad before entering the school.

“The preference awarded to the interests of the masters over those of the scholars” can hardly be separated from “the insufficient number of teachers.” I cannot complain of these moderate expressions, as the fruit of my commentary on the second letter. Indeed, apart from what concerns myself only, there is not much in this third letter that distinguishes it unfavourably from what one is used to in respectable periodicals; and I am glad to see that the writer has practically mended his ways, though he covers his retreat with a tolerable amount of vindictiveness.

The charge brought against the boys of “growing habits of luxury and self-indulgence” is one that I cannot, with propriety examine more closely than I did before. I believe that there will always be a certain amount of extravagance in a school flooded with the sons of wealthy people, and that it needs considerable skill and energy on the part of masters to check it: it is a difficulty that we share with colleges which receive gentlemen-commoners, and with certain distinguished regiments. But luxury is not on the increase with us; and the charge advanced by the Tiverton lecturer in 1860 would have been advanced with more truth, and in better taste, some few years before.

Nor am I in a position to give Mr. —— all the information he requires with regard to the income of my colleagues and of the Head Master. On these topics he is not very correct, but he is, as I had suggested, at home in statistics, and quite in his element when discussing the cost of gas.

I had said that he had overstated the Head Master’s income. On looking at his figures, I see that he reckons eight hundred boys as paying an annual fee to the Head Master: this figure should be reduced, by taking away the Lower School, the collegers, and a few others, to about six hundred. The fees paid at entrance are not all received by the Head Master, as a great many boys enter the Lower School and divide their fees between the two chiefs; nor do I believe that so many as two hundred boys enter every year.

Mr. —— has, in consideration of these doubts or the like, struck off 1500*l.* But he has not struck off the stipends of 44*l.* paid to

sixteen* assistants ; and there are other outgoings for schoolrooms and books, which may perhaps be nearly covered by the " very handsome salary " derived from the liberality of the founder. The leaving-fees are apparently overstated, as many boys below the fifth form leave without paying fees ; but there is a set-off against this deduction in the annual tax on titles, which Mr. — omits. Whatever the net income of the Head Master may be, it is unreasonable to contrast it with the income of the Dean of Christchurch : for the one appointment is tenable for life, and brings with it more dignity than labour ; the other can only be held so long as one is strong enough to undergo crushing fatigue and responsibility. Why not compare Eton incomes with Harrow incomes ? Then there would be something like parity of circumstances.

As to a tutor's income, it is no more a matter for public investigation than that of a surgeon or a barrister. If the parents of pupils think they do not get their money's worth, let them say so. In particular, if they think that certain half-voluntary fees are really taxes levied without reason, let them, as the Westminster Review † suggests, take upon themselves to refuse them. Amongst the many extra charges which Mr. — enumerates, some are, I have always thought, hardly defensible ; others might with advantage be commuted for an addition to the annual payment for board, or for an entrance fee (which at present no tutor receives) ; others are purely optional, and must remain extra charges. In the first of these three classes I should include such items as chapel-clerk's fee, postman's fee, watching and lighting, and gas ; in the second class, some of the charges connected with board and lodging, others being altogether abolished ; in the third, the payments made to those who teach fencing, drawing, swimming, and the like. It is erroneous to put all these on the same footing. I leave it to those gentlemen who are concerned in these pecuniary affairs to go into further details about them.

When I said that the incomes of my colleagues were "nearly

* The sixteen include the senior mathematical master. Besides his stipend, the Head Master makes considerable payments for the mathematical instruction of the collegers.

† The reviewer recommends that the boarding-houses should be supplied by Eton College rent free, and that the masters should pay for the boat in which the boys row their great race at Putney. Does he not perceive that this would amount to wasting an endowment on the sons of the rich, and making them presents that they would be ashamed to accept ?

doubled" * in an estimate that made them range from 1500*l.* to 3600*l.*, I was thinking not of the maximum only, but of the minimum. There are always several tutors whose receipts fall below, in some cases very far below, the assumed minimum. In calculating the maximum, I went by the rate settled with the Income-tax Commissioners, that for each boy in a tutor's house the profit out of 120*l.* should be reckoned at 49*l.*; and I took the highest number of boys in a tutor's house to be thirty-two, according to the rule.

Whatever an Eton master's income may be, I repeat that he could make as much if he kept a private school, and that, if the appointments were thrown open, there would be nothing for the world to meddle with. As it is, I do not at all dispute the right of any one to discuss, as a gentleman did in the columns of the "Times" two or three years ago, the legitimacy of particular school charges. There is a tendency in all schools to allow an incrustation of new wants, and to raise considerable sums by small taxes. Every now and then a new man comes, and by a few strokes consolidates the petty payments. The older the school is, the more need there is of external criticism, because even petty payments, when ancient, are hard to rub off.

We can only ask to be treated by our critics with the same moderation which one observes in those conspicuous letters addressed to the editor of the "Times" by such influential writers as the "Civilian" who assails the Horse Guards, or the "Governor of St. George's Hospital" who combats the under-secretary of that establishment. Judging from the manifest improvement of the Cornhill letter-writer, we have good reason to hope that he will in his fourth or fifth letter attain that decorous phraseology which would suit a correspondent of the "Times."

I must now turn to personalities. Mr. ——, in his third letter, says that I confidently deny that "any full-grown Etonian" has failed to satisfy the military examiners. The sentence to which he must be referring is this: "As for the unscientific departments of the army, if any one says that full-grown Etonians go straight from the school to the Chelsea examinations, and are rejected for want of mathematical knowledge, there is nothing to be done but meet the assertion with a denial." (P. 24.)

Any one accustomed to read carefully what is written carefully,

* Mr. —— quotes "doubled," instead of "nearly doubled."

will see at a glance how my "confident denial" has been distorted. But, for the sake of those who do not read with care, I will add a few more words. I limited my statement to the examinations held at Chelsea for the line, having already said of Woolwich that Eton did not prepare immediately for it, and having said nothing of the Sandhurst matriculation. As to the Chelsea examinations, I limited my statement to the mathematical papers. As to the Chelsea mathematical papers, I still further limited my statement to full-grown Etonians going straight from the school: that is to say, I do not recognise a young man as a representative of Eton merely because he has at some time or other been in the school; and our teachers can warrant only those candidates who have recently passed our trials.

I have only to add that if any one will give me confidentially the name of any Eton boy who has passed upper division trials, and within a year has failed in the mathematical papers at Chelsea, I will acknowledge myself to have been misinformed.

Mr. —— challenges me to explain why we have a special "army class." I believe it was invented to allay a groundless alarm; that it has produced that effect; and that it has perished, or fallen into abeyance, for want of pupils.

He asks me whether I have had pupils that failed in Chelsea examinations. Perhaps I may have had some whose failures were not reported to me. The only case I know is that of a young gentleman who did not succeed in passing his examination at Eton for the fifth form on the first attempt, and left the school as a lower boy. I am told by his friends that he fails at Chelsea for want of Euclid; and, inasmuch as young gentlemen of marked bodily defects are admitted to the army, I think it "pedantic" to reject, for want of two books of Euclid, which can hardly be useful to an officer in the line, and to keep out of the Guards for years on merely intellectual grounds, a young man of good character, sufficient intelligence, and perfect physical qualifications.

The only remaining personal matter on which I have to trouble my readers is the dispute about the appointment of a second teacher in the voluntary French school.

In analysing* a sentence of Mr. ——'s second or December letter, which was, as I declared at starting (p. 8), the only text that was to be commented upon, I simply corrected a statement that there was

* Eton Reform, pp. 25, 26.

only one French master, which was not the truth then, nor had been the truth since May ; and I passed on at once to the admission, that our arrangements for teaching French were not satisfactory. When Mr. —— came to this correction, he looked, it seems, to the Eton School List of July, and found no second teacher of French named in it ; and then, finding the name in the list of December, he jumped to the conclusion that the appointment had been made since his December letter, and reproached me with suppressing this fact, and setting my pupils “a very bad example.” Whereupon I wrote to the “Times :” “A writer in the [Cornhill] Magazine asserted last December that there was only one teacher of French at Eton, and this an Englishman. I answered him, in a pamphlet printed in January, that there were two, and that one of them was a Frenchman. He now charges me with suppressing the fact that this Frenchman was appointed since he published his attack on Eton. Before making this charge he should have ascertained the real date of the appointment. The French gentleman entered upon his duties as a teacher at Eton on the 2nd of May.” To which Mr. —— replies : “Mr. Johnson is mistaken in saying that I first made the assertion that there was but one French master—an Englishman—at Eton to teach the whole school French, in December last. I made it in my first letter, published in the May number of the ‘Cornhill Magazine’ on the 26th of April, 1860. Mr. Johnson now states that a second French master—a Frenchman—was added to the staff of Eton masters on the 2nd of May, 1860, exactly six days after I had called public attention to the fact. In the list of Eton masters, published by authority at Election, 1860, this new French master’s name does not appear. It appears for the first time in the Eton list of Christmas, 1860.”

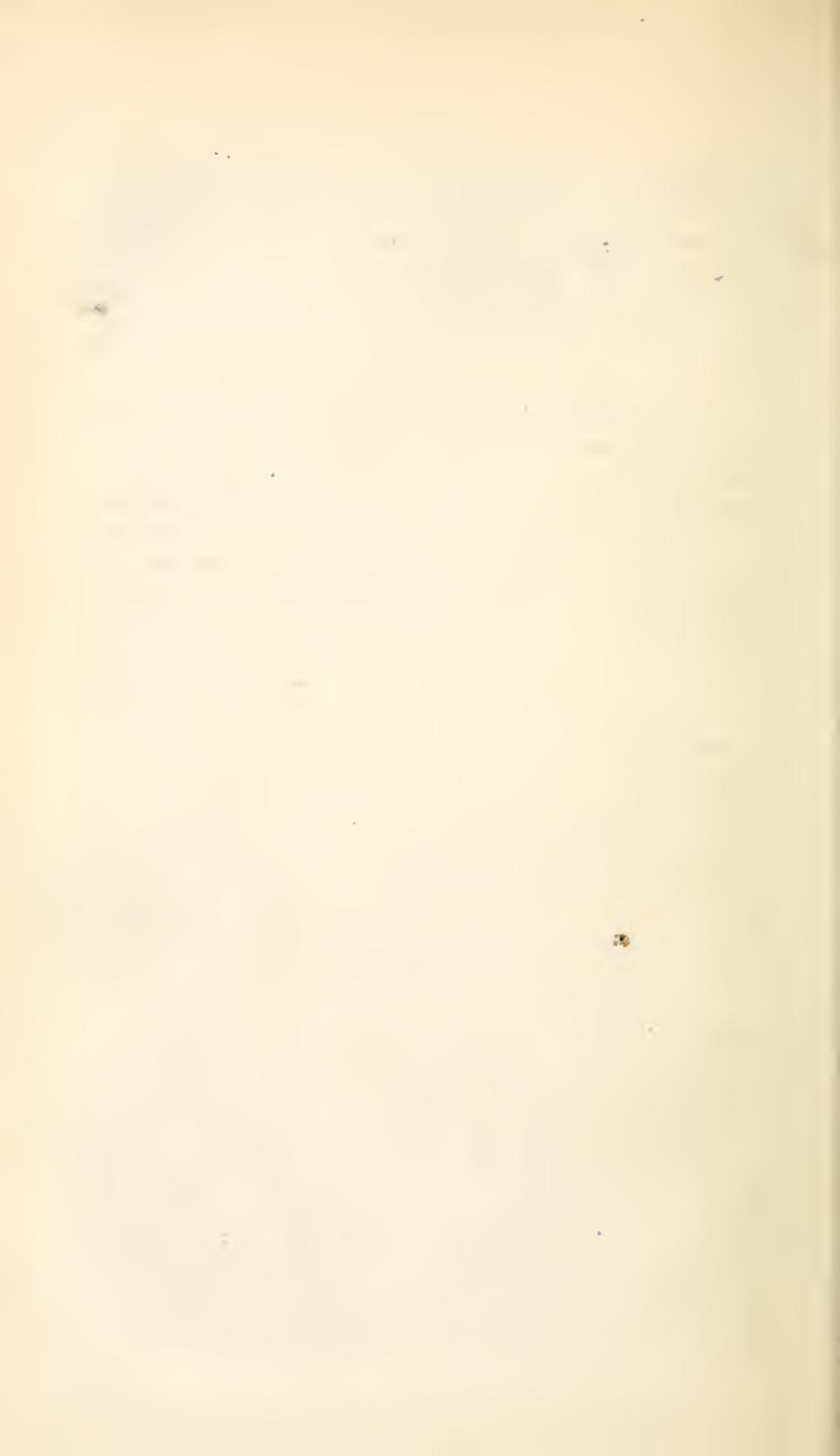
Now in this reply the word “first” is an interpolation. I did not say that Mr. —— made the assertion “first” in December. I had shown, as far as I could, that I knew it to be the third time of making the assertion, the second time of making it incorrectly ; for in my pamphlet (p. 25) I had spoken of its appearance last summer, under the same signature, in the Army and Navy Gazette, between the first and the second letter to the Cornhill Magazine. I had not blamed Mr. —— for the mistake, knowing it to be quite excusable. All I asked when I wrote to the “Times” was, that he should not charge me with deliberately suppressing the fact, that the appointment had been made between the date of his

December article and the publication of my reply to it. Instead of doing this he shifts the ground altogether, and would have people believe that I had been correcting a statement made in his first letter, and also that the French teacher was appointed after he wrote his first letter, whereas he had been appointed early in April after inquiries commenced at the beginning of the year, and actually "entered on his duties" as soon as possible after the Easter holidays.

This unwillingness to withdraw an insulting charge may present a formidable appearance of impenetrability; but it does not, I find, produce so favourable an impression as the accuser expects on the minds of those young readers to whom he thinks it decent to appeal. I cannot discover that they hold their school in less esteem than they did before it fell under the displeasure of this nameless but well-known writer. At all events they have paid me the inestimable compliment of taking more pains with their work.

W.M. JOHNSON.

April 10, 1860.



POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the foregoing pages were sent to press, I have read an article on Eton College in the Edinburgh Review, and I wish to add a few remarks on it.

The reviewer says, that since the appointment of an assistant-master resident in college, "the collegers are admitted to have become the cream of the school. Formerly they were its dregs." I happen to have said: "When the prizes and honours of the school were for the most part gained by oppidans, the collegers were more like the refuse than the cream of the school." This expression seems to me very far from being as positive as that for which the reviewer gives me credit. It might be thought from the reviewer's language that he had some authority for saying, as he does elsewhere, "The *élite* of the school now compete eagerly for admission into college." In fact, almost all the boys who are elected into college are prepared for the examination elsewhere. An oppidan can hardly ever be got to work for this honour.

"The collegers," says the reviewer, "being the ablest and most industrious boys in the school, must all learn mathematics, an extra which involves a payment of seven hundred guineas," i.e. ten guineas apiece. This is a mistake. The collegers must all learn mathematics, and, as I have stated above, they learn them for nothing. Some of them have voluntary extra lessons: I believe not more than one in six or seven. They manage to get the Tomline prizes sometimes without any extra teaching, or at least without any extra payment.

There have been since September, 1860, eight, not seven, mathematical teachers; and their names appear in the School List of December, 1860.

The military instructor, whom the reviewer takes to be a drill-sergeant, is represented in the same document as Major Griffiths, Royal Artillery. I am not aware that he has any pupils.

It is not correct to say that "every exercise, every map, every copy of verses is first submitted to the private tutor for inspection and

correction before it is carried into school." The tutor inspects and corrects the themes and the verses of all his pupils, the translations and Greek prose exercises of some. He does not inspect and correct the translations nor the Greek prose exercises (when done out of an exercise book) of his pupils in the fifth form, nor the maps nor the translations done by his pupils below the fifth form.

Whether he is, as a general rule, jaded and wearied with so much work, is a question not to be settled by inferential reasoning so much as by the evidence of those with whom he lives.

The duties of a pupil-room containing forty boys (not all at once, as the reviewer seems to imagine) are not "overwhelming" to a man of fair health and capacity. Independent of the regular tutor's work, which consists simply of looking over exercises and preparing construing lessons for school, a tutor does with his pupils a certain number of regular lessons, corresponding to the private lectures of college tutors. He divides his pupils into about four classes. Each of these classes he meets on Sunday for not more than an hour. On week-days he meets each class of fifth-form pupils twice, for an hour each time, to read such books as Greek plays, Thucydides, or Demosthenes: with those below the fifth-form the practice varies; I meet them once a week. Besides this, a tutor receives special classes to be prepared for trials and voluntary examinations, and, during several weeks in almost every year, for confirmation. All these, and many other little extraordinary services, are rendered alike to those who do, and to those who do not, pay the double tuition-fee, so that on the one hand the sons of poor men may lose no advantage, and on the other hand the sons of rich men may not grumble at being worked harder than their schoolfellows.

This may be an anomalous state of things, but it does not seem to me to be such an imposture as the reviewer thinks it.

"A boy," says the reviewer, "may leave Eton *with credit*, and yet be quite unable to pass the common tests of the Civil Service examiners. His Latin versification may be exquisite, but he may be unable to cipher, to spell, to name the principal rivers of the globe, or to write his mother-tongue with ease and correctness." The words "with credit" had better be left out, if the writer wishes this to be accepted as anything but a fancy sketch. Whether a boy has left Eton "with credit" can be inferred from the place he takes in his class.

We do not, of course, pique ourselves on our English; but we are not so backward as to write about "an appliance of cream-laid paper," a phrase which the reviewer quotes from me.

"It has been stated by Dr. Goodford," says the reviewer, "that seven out of twenty-one masters of Eton are men who have distinguished themselves at college." What Dr. Goodford said was, that the seven masters appointed by himself had distinguished themselves. He did not say that none of the others had done well at college.

I have not "pounced upon these slight inaccuracies, in order to prove that all the reviewer's statements are untrustworthy," but only because I thought them worth correcting.

The reviewer may rest assured that, if his forerunners had been as accurate and temperate as himself, I should have taken no notice of them.

Errata.

Page 14, line 32, *for* embued *read* imbued.

„ 33, „ 20, „ oppidans „ collegers.

„ 39, „ 18, „ 1860 „ 1861.

„ 42, „ 18, „ week-days „ two week-days.

„ „ „ 19, leave out twice.

THE END

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W. J.

April 12, 1861.

THE END

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